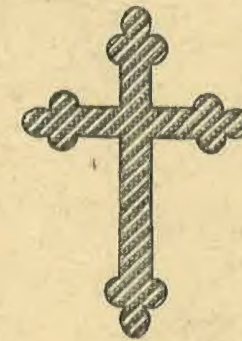


Allen Evans

THE CHURCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL



A RECORD OF THE PASTORATE  
OF REV. A. J. ARKIN

## FOREWORD

---

To speak of St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church, Richmond, Philadelphia, is to call to mind at once the name of a man who has been associated with it for the last thirty years. I refer to the pastor, Dr. A. J. Arkin.

It is due to his courage, untiring efforts and self-denial that St. George's Church has attained the high standing and recognition in the community in which it is located.

I shall endeavor to give a brief history of the founding of St. George's and the obstacles that were to be overcome before any results could be obtained; how, by the grace of God, the Church was established, and what it has done for the neighborhood. Then we will describe the wonderful efforts of our Pastor, Dr. Arkin, to show and declare to anyone who may read this pamphlet, that this neighborhood has been blessed by having a man in its midst who is sincere in spreading the teachings of the Great Master, Jesus Christ, namely, to love God and neighbor.

ROBERT GORDON DUNCAN.



## ST. GEORGE'S P. E. CHURCH

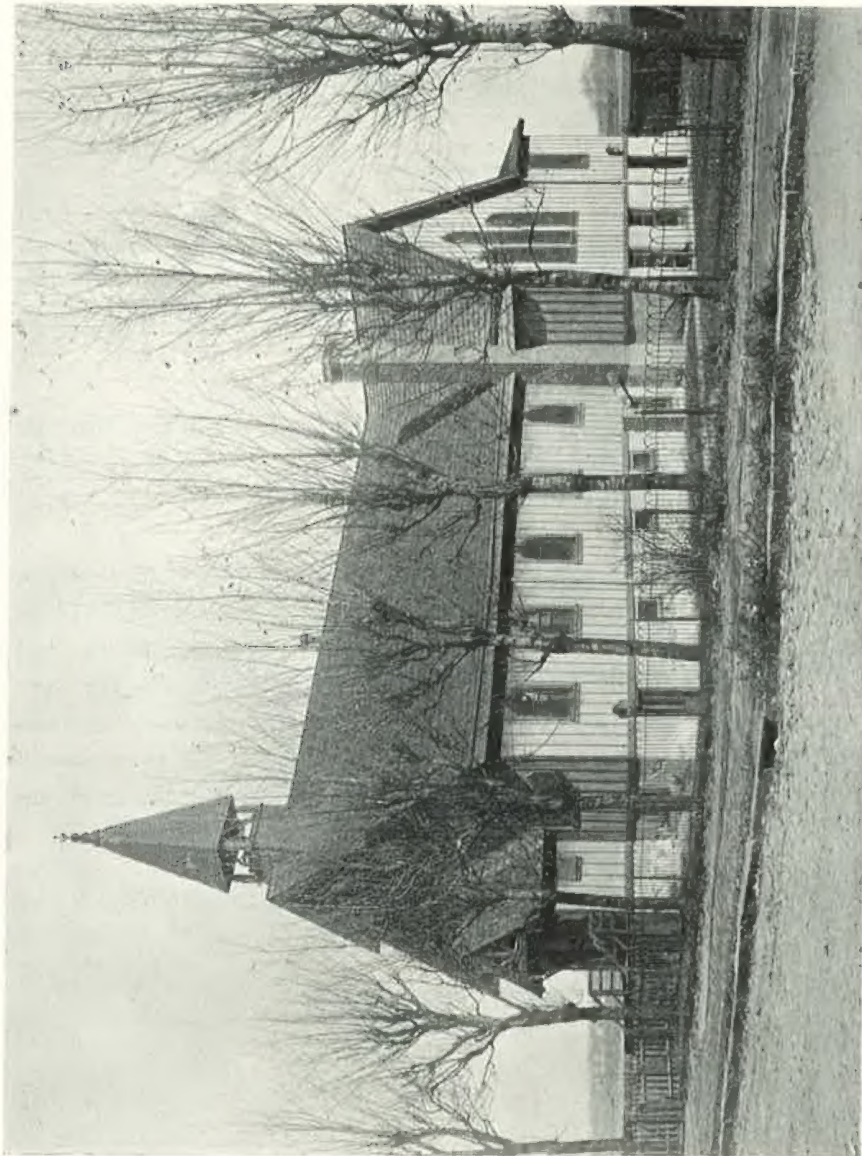
It was in the latter part of 1886 that Mr. John Totty, an Englishman and devout Churchman, who at the time was a lay-reader at the Emanuel P. E. Church, Marlborough Street and Girard Avenue, Philadelphia, in company with the Dean of the Germantown Convocation, Rev. Dr. James DeWolf Perry, was seeking a place to start a Mission in the northeastern part of Philadelphia, in a locality known as Venango. Mr. James McGowan, a Union veteran who lived in that neighborhood, offered his help to Dr. Perry and Mr. Totty. They rented a room in an old abandoned weaver's shop, owned by a Roman Catholic named Hewitt, located at Bath and Victoria Streets. This building, used during the week for ward meetings, dancing, sparring matches, was known as "Hurricane Hall" and was a popular place of resort for employees of the Philadelphia Gas Company, Station B, and of Cramp's Shipyard.

In this structure, on the second Sunday of January, 1887, Mr. John Totty and his wife, one of the finest Christian women the writer has had the pleasure to meet, held their first Sunday school with thirty-six scholars and five teachers. Regular church services were only an occasional feature during the first twelvemonth.

The following year, through the intercession of Mr. Totty and Dean Perry, the late Mr. W. W. Frazier donated a lot, 80 by 100 feet, situated at the corner of Edgemont and Venango Streets. A frame building for the accommodation of 150 people was erected at a cost of \$1,700. The bell cost \$106 and was cast in Baltimore. A small old pipe organ of English make and pumped by hand was donated by Bouness Briggs of the Wilmington and Northern Railroad.

The first sexton was Mr. Samuel T. Brown, who gave his services without cost and whose daughter, Olive, was one of Mr. Totty's first Sunday school teachers. In later years she became a parish worker of St. George's. She is still lovingly remembered for her sincerity and faithfulness.

The Chapel stood in an isolated district. Back of it, as far as the eye could see, were truck farms. In front stretched dumps and vacant lots, with a few small houses in the immediate neighborhood. It is difficult to realize the sacrifices made by Mr. Totty and his wife in carrying on their missionary work in that desolate part of the city and among people mostly estranged from the Church through hardships. But the sincerity of the missionaries and the work which they accomplished soon won the confidence of the residents, quite a few of whom joined the Chapel and became good Christians and made this "Venango Village" a better place to live in.



ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL—VENANGO



From 1887 to 1900 these two faithful followers of Christ carried on His work incessantly, but their labor of love began to tell on them physically, so that in 1900 they both returned to England, the land of their birth. But they always cherished the fondest memories of the little Chapel they had started and prayed for its success. When, some years later, they passed to the Great Beyond, the Good Master surely received them, saying: "Well done, good and faithful servants." In their will they left \$1,000 for the work of the Chapel.

In the thirteen years of Mr. Totty's service (during which he was made Deacon) one hundred and seventy-five were baptized and approximately one hundred were confirmed. In his last report, that of April, 1900, there were thirty-eight families, numbering seventy-seven communicants, with an average attendance at church services of about fifty.

Mr. Charles E. Tuke, a Divinity School student, and a former scholar of the Sunday school, now rector of St. John's Church, Lansdowne, had charge of the Chapel from July 1, 1900, to September 16, 1900. Mr. Alfred A. Gilman, another Divinity School student, and now Suffragan Bishop of Hankow, China, followed him and took charge of the Chapel and served from October 7, 1900, to June, 1901. During Mr. Gilman's time the Rev. C. S. Fulforth, of the Messiah Church, Richmond, officiated at Holy Communion. Mr. Waldemar Jansen, another Philadelphia Divinity School student, was assigned to the Chapel June 16, 1901. Rev. Jansen is now rector of Trinity, Oxford.

Following his resignation the small congregation diminished in numbers until scarcely anyone attended the services, and the Convocation seriously considered giving up this Mission. But Bishop Whitaker, who felt that there was need for such an outpost of the Church, finally persuaded the Convocation to raise \$800 for a missionary's salary and to persevere for one year more. And he appointed a young deacon, the Rev. Mr. A. J. Arkin, just out of the Divinity School, to take charge.

On Sunday morning, November 24, 1901, this young man preached his first sermon to a congregation of eleven people, six of whom comprised the family of the sexton, Mr. John Buckley. In the evening there were sixteen males and fourteen females, one-half of them children.

These were the conditions under which Dr. Arkin became pastor of St. George's. But he came with open eyes, for when Bishop Whitaker offered him the charge, he displayed Mr. Gilman's report stating that any man coming to this Mission would have to have the courage and patience of one ready and willing to go to a Mission in a foreign field.

This statement, though anything but encouraging, correctly set forth the conditions confronting the new pastor.

The Chapel was lighted by kerosene oil lamps hung on the walls and suspended from the low ceiling, and the ventilation was virtually non-existent. The altar was a rough wooden box, cloth-covered, and the black pews old and worn. There was no choir. The grounds around the Chapel were utterly neglected. The Mission looked like one long deserted.

When the present members of St. George's look at the fine church they are now occupying and picture in their minds the old Chapel of thirty years ago, they may find it difficult to appreciate even in part the self-denying efforts which were required to bring about this change.

Soon after Dr. Arkin came to take charge of St. George's Chapel, Bishop Whitaker was taken sick and had to go to California, where he remained for eighteen months. Meantime, in the absence of the Diocesan, the entire responsibility of this Mission was placed on the young minister's shoulders.

During his Divinity School days, Mr. Arkin had been assistant chaplain in the Angora Church Home for Children, where he made friends among its managers. By their financial aid he managed to replace the kerosene oil lamps with gas lights, making the interior of St. George's cheerful and inviting to begin with. Then he threw himself into a search of people to come to church. The obstacles in the way were tremendous. He succeeded in getting their children to come, but it was some time before they began to come themselves.

Persistent efforts finally brought results. Attendance grew steadily, so that the little Chapel was not able to accommodate the people. So Mr. Arkin again appealed for help. This time he went to the Diocesan Committee of the Women's Auxiliary and these kind women responded generously to his appeal. A reed organ came as a gift from Heppe & Son, and Miss E. F. Taylor, a student in the Deaconess House, volunteered to play it. She also organized a choir.

St. Paul's Congregation, Chestnut Hill, the first large church to show interest in this Mission, evidenced for many years, sent their choir-master, Dr. Read, with a choir of twenty-four voices to give a choral service on Sunday evening, January 26, 1902. This demonstration of what a good choir means to a church, led to the formation of a vested choir in St. George's. Then Mr. Arkin organized a Mothers' Meeting, a Girls' Friendly Society and a Young Men's Club and had them meet in the Chapel. In this way he brought the people in closer contact with one another.

Dean LeRoy, visiting the Chapel Saturday, March 8, 1902, concluded that this Mission needed more room for its activities, and a building fund was started. St. Paul's Congregation of Aramingo donated a set



of Communion vessels. Mr. Horace C. Noviach presented a brass prayer-book rest for the chancel as a thank offering for the recovery of his mother from a spell of sickness.

This admirable way of showing appreciation for the wonderful things God does for us is worthy of emulation, and I believe that the people of this Mission would derive a lot of consolation if, after they have experienced some reverses and have overcome them, they would give thanks by some gift to the Church, no matter how small, to help the good work for which this charitable Church is reputed.

On June 29, 1902, Mr. Arkin was able to present a Confirmation Class of twenty-three young men and women, the Rt. Rev. Leighton Coleman, Bishop of Delaware, officiating in the absence of Bishop Whitaker. This was a beautiful service, as the writer knows, for he was one of this class and has always been thankful that Mr. Arkin encouraged him in joining this Church.

On July 1, 1902, ground was broken for an extension of the Chapel. It was lengthened and a basement was built underneath for Sunday school and other activities. A chancel was also built, the ceiling removed, and the roof wainscoted on the inside, giving it a churchly appearance. The chancel and the transept windows were given by St. Martin's in the Field, through the kindness of Mr. Samuel F. Houston, its warden, and Dean LeRoy, its rector.

The cornerstone was laid July 22, 1902, at 2 P. M., in the presence of a goodly company. Dean Jacob LeRoy officiated, assisted by Rev. Curtis White and the Missionary. Bishop Coleman of Delaware held services in the new Chapel on September 11th. On his return Bishop Whitaker held a dedication service, assisted by Dr. L. M. Robinson, of the Divinity School, December 2, 1902. It certainly made the old Bishop's heart beat with gratification to see the transformation; an improved and beautiful Chapel, a large bishop's chair donated by the sexton, Mr. John Buckley, as a memorial to his wife who was an ardent worker of the Chapel, and the new Communion set. Holy Communion was administered to seventy-nine persons. The occasion, with its visible signs of changes wrought in so short a time, furnished welcome proof to the kindly Bishop that he had selected the right man to carry out his desire of bringing the word of Jesus Christ to the working people of the Northeast, whom he dearly loved.

Subsequent Confirmation classes were large and mostly drawn from people who before had little, if any, interest in any church—proof of the best sort that missionary work was being done with good results. Most of these people had to walk about a mile across lots and fields,

another evidence that if the teachings of the Saviour be brought to the people in the right manner, they will put up with a lot of inconvenience to hear them.

It became evident, however, that the Chapel was ill situated for the best results, and Mr. Arkin tried more than once to show this to the Convocation. Nothing was done, however, until at one of the Convocation meetings the Rev. J. Andrew Harris, S.T.D., rector of St. Paul's Church, Chestnut Hill, invited Dr. Arkin to present the case to his congregation, which was done on the third Sunday morning in November, 1905. The congregation responded with a plate offering of over \$1,300 towards a building fund. Moreover, a distinguished Churchman, the late Mr. Arthur E. Newbold, who attended this service, was so impressed by the presentation of the case as to take the trouble of visiting the Richmond neighborhood on the following Monday morning, going over the ground afoot, to see for himself the conditions described by Mr. Arkin, leaving his card under the door of 3113 Richmond Street, where Mr. Arkin was boarding.

The next morning, presenting himself at the address given on the card, Mr. Arkin found Mr. Newbold at his office of the Drexel & Company, Fifth and Chestnut Streets. It was their first meeting and the beginning of a lasting mutual respect and friendship, to the great advantage of St. George's Mission. Mr. Newbold frankly said that he had examined the conditions and found them accurately stated, and asked what he could do to help. Mr. Arkin suggested an interview with Bishop-Coadjutor Mackay-Smith, then in charge of Diocesan Missions.

The Dean and the Bishop-Coadjutor at that time entertained the idea of erecting a portable corrugated iron church for St. George's so that in case the work failed it could be removed for missionary purposes elsewhere. When the interview with Mr. Newbold took place, and he asked how much money was needed for St. George's, the Bishop said \$8,000, which Mr. Newbold immediately granted.

But when Mr. Arkin heard of this, he told the Bishop-Coadjutor frankly that he could not work in a field in which the possibility of failure was entertained. Unfavorable as conditions looked, he must work on the basis of permanency, as if the work was sure to succeed, and insisted on the erection of a Parish House of the finest possible architecture, built of stone. Whereupon three visits were made by Bishop Whitaker to this neighborhood, walking over the area of empty lots in company with Mr. Arkin in search of a suitable location. On his last visit he was accompanied also by Bishop Mackay-Smith. The weather was cold and windy, and it was snowing. But Bishop Whitaker



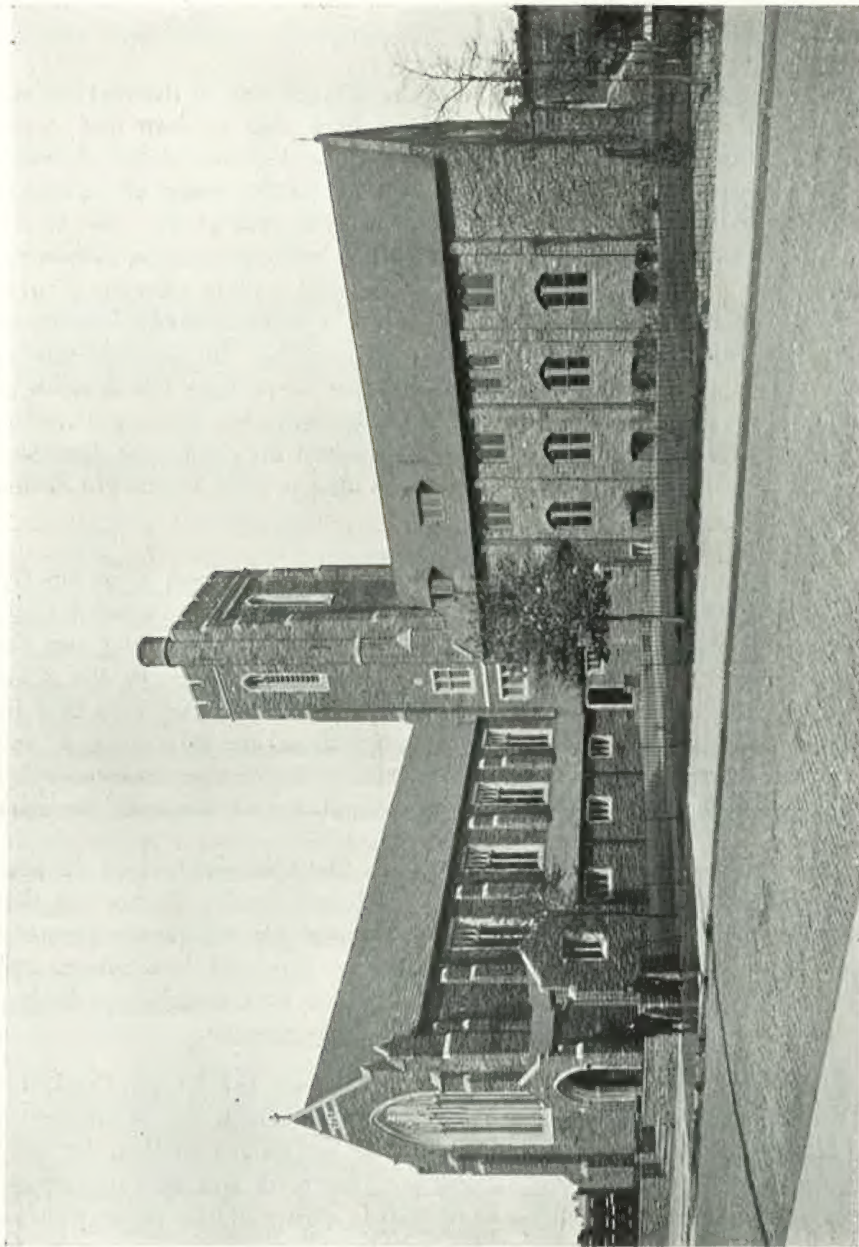
braved the storm with the missionary afoot, while Bishop Mackay-Smith took refuge in his carriage, driving alongside of them.

Subsequently Mr. Edward H. Bonsall, a banker, who has always been a faithful friend of St. George's, found that the lot which was finally selected and on which the present buildings stand, was owned by Mrs. Anne Weightman Walker, afterwards Mrs. Penfield, and he was authorized to purchase it for \$7,500. The lot, 116 by 150 feet, faces E. Indiana Avenue between Almond and Livingston Streets, about a mile from the Chapel. This lot was anything but attractive and located in a neighborhood not very friendly to an Episcopal Church at that time, as Mr. Arkin was soon to find out.

While looking towards the new Parish House in Richmond, Mr. Arkin determined to hold on to the old Chapel in Venango. Therefore, a year before the transfer, he organized a daily kindergarten under a trained teacher and secured help for her salary through Mr. Henry W. Marston, and his father, John Marston, intensely interested in children's welfare. It was a great success from the beginning. Miss Ethel A. Ott, of Doylestown, very gifted in kindergarten work, was the teacher; and she continued in charge of forty to fifty little tots for the following sixteen years, during which time she endeared herself to the whole Venango neighborhood. Many members of the Old Chapel today are among the graduates of her school. She did a great deal of charity work among the poor. The people still call her blessed.

On Saturday, November 3, 1906, in the presence of quite a company of clergymen, members of the congregation and friendly neighbors, and a large choir, the Rt. Rev. Mackay-Smith, D.D., Bishop-Coadjutor, laid the cornerstone of the new Parish House facing Indiana Avenue. The lot on which the Parish House is built was formerly used as a neighborhood dumping ground, covered with tin cans, discarded wire mattresses, ash heaps and refuse. It was a place also for drunken brawls, crap shooting and occasional local baseball games.

For this reason the houses on Indiana Avenue facing it were up for sale, their owners looking for a more desirable neighborhood to live in. On the other two sides, the two-story brick dwellings were occupied by families that did not care how they acted and who were antagonistic to the coming of the Parish House and its pastor, and tried to make life miserable for him. They showed this by acts of wanton mischief during the construction of the building and continued breaking of windows, destroying the newly planted shrubs and grass plots, and interference with the church services. Pleading with their parents was met with indifference and even insult. The police seemed quite luke-



ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH—RICHMOND



warm or helpless. It is a long story of sordid persecution too unpleasant to dwell upon. Even at this writing it is not altogether dead yet.

On Sunday, May 26th, the first service was held in the new Parish House, when Bishop Mackay-Smith confirmed a class of twenty-seven. It was raining hard, but the building was crowded to the doors.

There was left in the Old Chapel, in addition to the daily kindergarten, a small Sunday school which Mr. Arkin was loath to abandon. So he persuaded Miss Katherine C. Coulter, a public school teacher and devout churchwoman, to give her services to the Sunday school. Although the assignment was accepted with reluctance, she has been doing valuable missionary work there ever since. Later her sister Leah, equally devout, joined her in the Sunday school work. Miss Coulter is dearly beloved by all the people in Venango.

In the course of two or three years the Sunday school kept growing, and Mr. Arkin grasped the opportunity for reopening church services. He secured two Brotherhood of St. Andrew men, of St. Matthew's Church, Eighteenth Street and Girard Avenue, Mr. Ware and Charles G. Barnes, of blessed memory, who conducted evening services until the coming of Mr. Paul S. Atkins, now rector of St. John's, York, Pa., who acted as lay-reader in charge of the Old Chapel Mission, Mr. Arkin visiting the Chapel once a month for Holy Communion. Mr. Atkins was aided by Mr. Barnes, a saintly man, who deliberately left a well paying position and a fine home, and moved with his like-minded mother and sister to a house in Venango, finding a smaller position at a much less salary, that he might have more time to devote to his missionary work in the Chapel neighborhood. He became the treasurer of the Chapel and its organist and choirmaster, and the friend of everybody. His work was exceedingly fruitful. His death during the raging epidemic of influenza was mourned by all. He will always be remembered for his saintly life. Mr. George E. Sladen, another Brotherhood man devoted to church work, succeeded Mr. Atkins in May, 1913, and served until February, 1922, when it became too much for Dr. Arkin to carry on both Missions, as he had done, and a regular clergyman was appointed for the Old Chapel separately.

Meantime the work in Richmond around the Parish House grew apace. Early in 1916 the new Bishop of the Diocese, Dr. Philip M. Rhinelander, visited St. George's, Richmond, on a weekday by invitation of Dr. Arkin, who showed him all the records and took him around the neighborhood. The Bishop then decided that the Mission needed a church building, with the result that on December 23, 1916, at three o'clock, a group of men, women and children gathered to break ground

for a new St. George's Church building, Indiana Avenue and Almond Street. It was a cold day and the service was held in the Parish House, Indiana Avenue and Livingston Street, after which the people came out and broke ground formally with the same spade used in the breaking of ground for the Parish House ten years before; also in the improvement of St. George's Chapel, East Venango and Edgemont Streets, almost fifteen years before.

On April 28, 1917, at 3.30 in the afternoon, the Rt. Rev. Philip Mercer Rhinelander, D.D., D.C.L., L.L.D., officiated at the laying of the cornerstone of the new church. The following articles were placed in the box: Copies of the *North American* and the *Record* of the day, copy of *Diocesan News*, *St. George's Visitor*, program of the service, a coin of 1917, a Bible and a prayer book and a hymnal, together with photographs of Bishop Rhinelander, Suffragan Bishop Garland, and Dr. Arkin, and 405 cards bearing the names of those who wished their names associated with this solemn occasion.

On February 15, 1916, "The Father's Meeting" was organized, and for some time this organization had attendances of about seventy-five men. They had meetings on Thursday evenings and every other meeting night a speaker was engaged to talk on some subject of the day. These meetings were very interesting and instructive.

February 15, 1917, the first annual banquet of the "Father's Meeting" was held in the basement of the Parish House, Dr. Edward J. Cattell being the principal speaker.

On December 26, 1916, a branch of the Girls' Protective League of about sixty-five members was organized, the object of the league being mutual protection and wholesome recreation.

Sometime in the year 1913 three men of an Italian settlement not far from St. George's happened to attend its Sunday evening service, at the close of which, in conversation with the pastor who met them at the door, they expressed a desire to come again. As the result of this acquaintance a small Italian Men's Bible Class was organized under the leadership of a young man sent by the Rev. Thomas E. Della Cioppa of the L'Emmanuel Mission, this city. This Bible Class grew into a good sized congregation who worshiped in St. George's Church for the following six years, using our Prayer Book in Italian. These services were held every Sunday morning at nine o'clock, and for the last year and a half, when an Italian clergyman could not come, Dr. Arkin



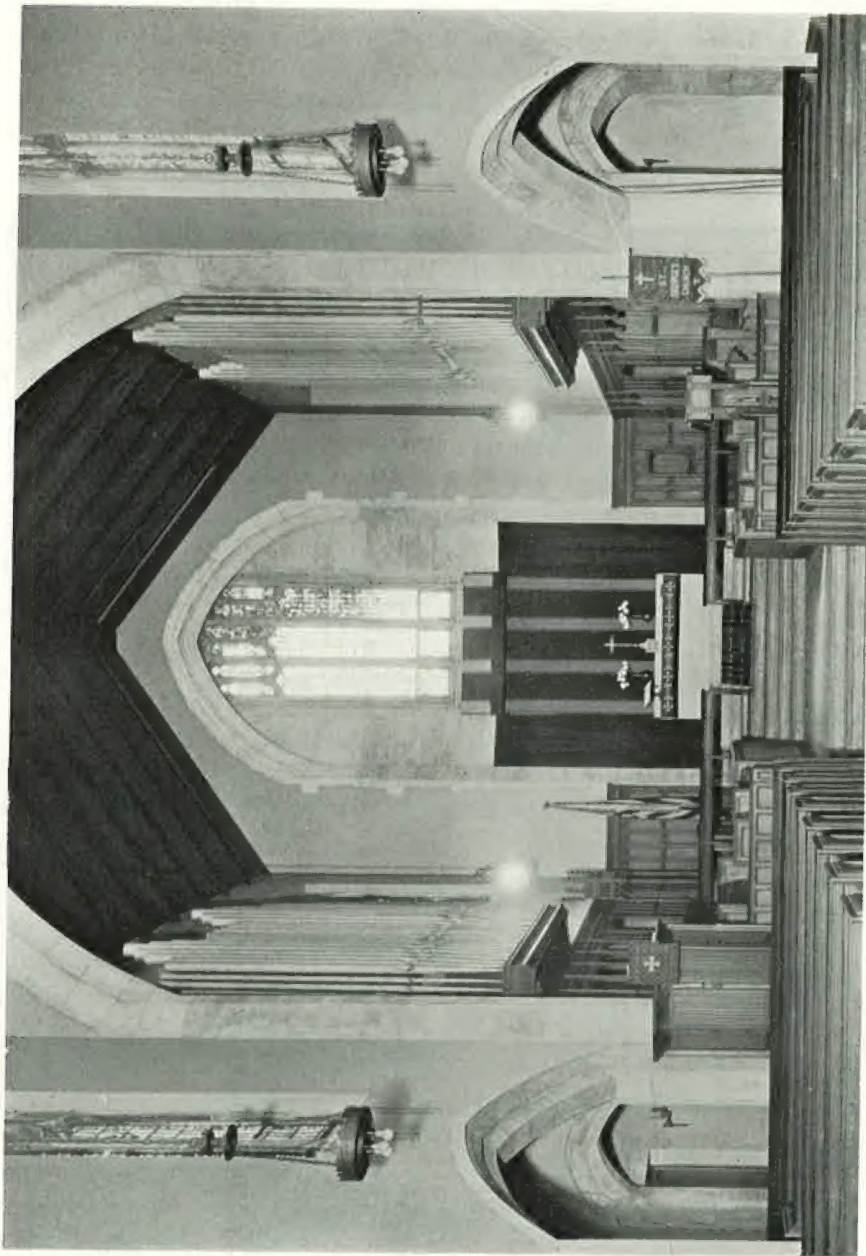
read the Communion service in Italian, until the lay-reader, Mr. Silvio Biagini, was ordained priest. At the end of six years the Italian congregation moved to their own Mission at Westmoreland and Memphis Streets under the name of St. Mary, where it is doing a splendid work.

Towards the end of 1917 Bishop Rhinelander inquired of Dr. Arkin if he could possibly find room in St. George's for a Polish congregation in need of a place of worship, and he replied that he would make room for them. The Rev. John B. Panfil, formerly a Roman missionary priest in the East, was in charge of this congregation, using the second floor of the Parish House as a regular place of worship, and its basement and the other rooms for his daily parochial school of 120 children under the supervision of the public school authorities. Under the faithful pastorate of this highly gifted priest the congregation grew steadily. In 1925, however, he decided to accept a call to take charge of an important missionary station in Iraq under the supervision of both the Church of England and of the Episcopal Church, a task for which he was eminently qualified as linguist, teacher and his missionary experience in the East. He was succeeded by the Rev. Edward M. Baczewski, who, transferring the children of the parochial school to the public school, has been devoting himself earnestly to pastoral work wholly. In 1928 the Polish congregation moved to its present buildings, 2959-61 Richmond Street, formerly a Lutheran church and rectory.

Because of his readiness to encourage any religious movement that would lead men and women to Christ, who would otherwise be drifting churchless, Dr. Arkin has sometimes been most unjustly criticized as a "proselytizer," whatever this may mean. This is far from the truth. On the contrary, I know of several instances in which he used his influence to dissipate intolerance, religious and racial, both in homes and in the community, in the interest of peace and the spirit of brotherhood.

Good fellowship has been his slogan, and for this he found a staunch and faithful supporter in Major A. J. Drexel Biddle, highly respected and beloved in St. George's, who for the last twenty-five years has given himself unstintedly and unostentatiously to this object, namely, the promotion of good fellowship among men.

Major Biddle has given much of his life to this end, both by means of athletics and no less by means of Bible classes. Most of us will never forget the thrill of good fellowship felt at the gatherings of thousands of men of the Drexel Biddle Bible Classes in the years before the World War.



INTERIOR ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH—RICHMOND





REV. HARRY E. KAUFMANN

Having rendered valuable service during the war in training camps of the American army here and abroad, in November, 1920, he turned his attention again to St. George's. This resulted in the organization of a large company of boys under the name of Junior Marines, to which another company of girls under the same name was soon added, meeting weekly in St. George's Parish House for drill and recreation, with telling effect as regards their physical and moral improvement. For years Major Biddle provided them with a well-equipped summer camp available for stays of a week or two, with a day's entertainment for their parents and relatives.

Later St. George's Men's Guild was organized with Major Biddle as president. Holding regular meetings on Tuesday evenings, opportunity is thus afforded Dr. Arkin to instruct the men in Church history and in the literature and teachings of the Bible, with now and then an invited speaker on other subjects. The general discussion which usually follows each address is most interesting and instructive. But over and above all is the spirit of good fellowship which is contagious in the presence of Major Biddle, who is the embodiment of it. We certainly wish there were more men like him. And we are glad that he loves St. George's and its minister.

The lives and manners of people naturally soften and undergo refinement in noble surroundings, such as churches, libraries, public squares, high schools, playgrounds, recreation centers, and the like. Great and beneficial to the community as this influence springing from the material improvements brought about by St. George's Church has been, by far greater and more widespread has been the invisible and spiritual influence for good wrought in the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, through the pastoral work of this Church, and the activities of the many guilds and societies which it has fostered. Many whom St. George's has picked up from highways and byways in their childhood are now active church members in neighborhoods to which they have moved. And many have been given the right start in life through the solicitude of St. George's.

Limited space permits to mention only two outstanding examples. One is the Rev. Dr. Charles E. Tuke, now rector of St. John's Church, Lansdowne, Pa., who received his inspiration in the early days of St. George's, Venango. The other is Rev. Harry E. Kaufmann, recently ordained to the ministry, who has been associated with St. George's for the last twenty years, who in his maturer age has preferred the sacred ministry to a much better paying position which he had enjoyed. Needless to say, he is very highly respected and beloved by all who know him. Bishop Taitt has just appointed him in charge of Trinity Church, Collingdale.



Throughout all the thirty years of his incessant labor, Dr. Arkin has never asked anything for himself. In giving himself wholly to the Church he strove to strengthen it for the sole purpose of using its increased influence for the greater good of the people. The good of the people has been his only goal.

I know that if he were asked what reward should be bestowed upon him for all the work he has done, his answer would be: The people's loyalty to St. George's.

The reward of his heart's desire is a united people working together to hold up high the Church for which Christ died, and for which He rose again.

It would be to the everlasting credit of the people if they worked earnestly for the realization of this reward while Dr. Arkin is still with us.



## REV. DR. A. J. ARKIN

*For the Past Thirty Years Missionary of St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church, Richmond, Philadelphia*

In the Northeastern part of Philadelphia known as Port Richmond Bridesburg and Kensington, very few people realize the extent of the material and social improvements which have come to this vicinity through the untiring efforts of a clergyman who for the last thirty years has incessantly labored to that end, without ostentation or blare of trumpets, remaining silent even when credit due him has been erroneously given to others. This man is the Rev. Dr. A. J. Arkin, Missionary of St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church, Indiana Avenue and Livingston Street, who has been truly characterized as modest and retiring when speaking of his achievements, but always bold and militant in striving to reach them.

The writer deems it fitting that the people of this neighborhood should know more of the man and his background.

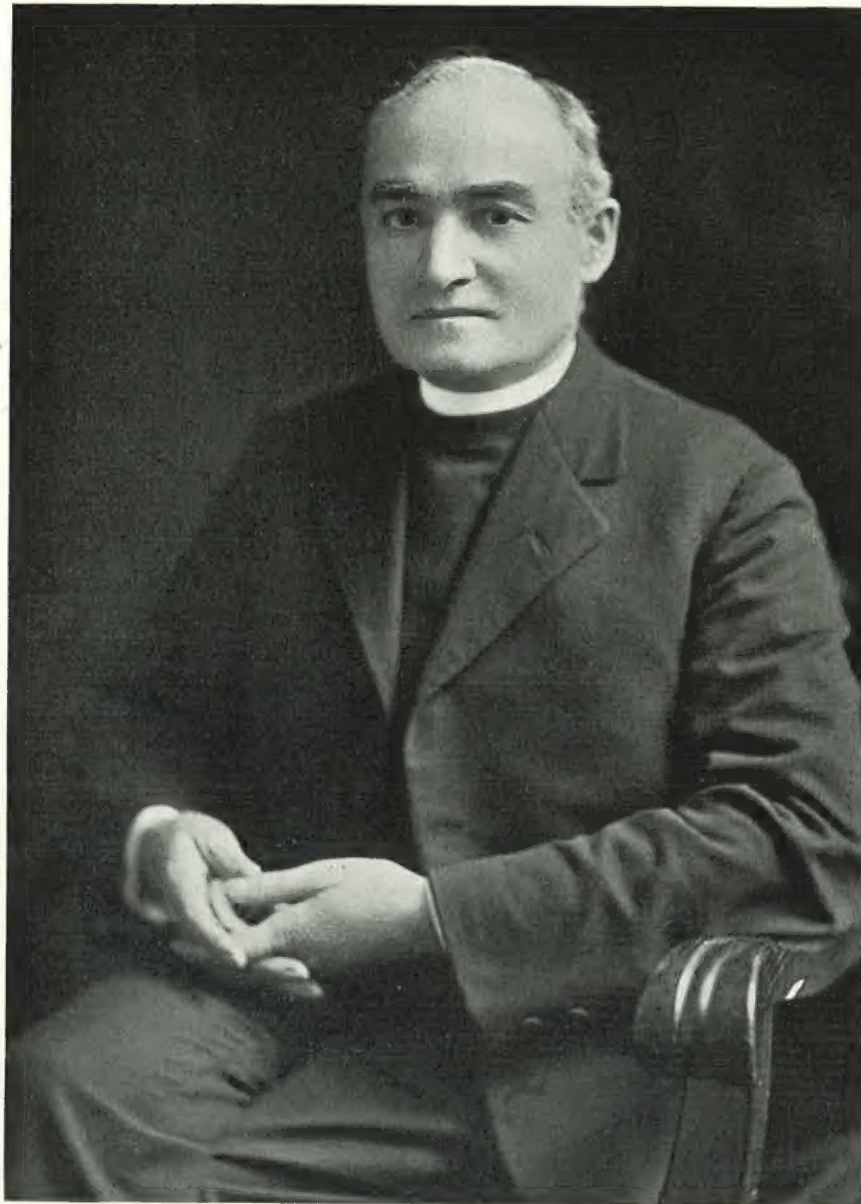
Reared by godly parents in a fairly well-to-do home in a little town in Northeastern Germany, he came to this country about 1880, the youngest in a group of idealistic men who sought to build a Socialist colony on the prairies of South Dakota where land could then be obtained free from the government on condition that it be cultivated and improved by the applicants. For nearly two years he and several of his companions worked on various farms in New York State to learn the art of farming, while the others homesteaded a tract of land in South Dakota. His indomitable will overcame the handicap of lameness in the left leg, the result of a kick received in childhood from a mare while running after her colt, and he succeeded in keeping abreast with other farm laborers.

Finally he joined his companions at the homesteads in Dakota. At the end of three years of the severest struggle with the climate, crop failures and consequent privation, this company of brave men, broken in spirit, reluctantly left the farm and with it their long-cherished dream, each to shift for himself.

Dr. Arkin, down but not out, found a job in the nearest town as a handy man in a combination comprising a hostelry and post office, with five acres of timberland and a large potato patch to cultivate, some miles from town, all owned by one man who was fond of hunting prairie chickens in the summer and wild ducks in the fall.

Dr. Arkin was kept busy during the long day's work at that time, but managed to practice in his bedroom till late in the night on a telegraph instrument which the druggist next door, a former telegraph





REV. DR. A. J. ARKIN

operator, out of the goodness of his heart gave him in addition to free instruction.

Having mastered to some degree the art of telegraphy, he hired out for board and lodging as a helper to the overworked railway station agent in the next town. There he familiarized himself with every detail of railway office work and secured practical wire experience, being entrusted to receive train orders and other messages from the train despatcher's office when the agent happened to be out. Soon the despatcher recognized his efficiency and offered him a job as night operator, working fourteen hours every night in the week, at a junction point on his division where during intervals he was able to study stenography from a little book.

After several promotions to different stations on the line had enabled him to accumulate some money, Dr. Arkin determined to enter the University of Minnesota. By that time he also became deeply interested in the Labor movement, having joined the Order of Railroad Telegraphers. Aspiring to an active part in its welfare, he felt the need of education to be of any use to the movement.

In Minneapolis, where the university is located, he worked as extra in the Western Union office from 5.30 P. M. sometimes till one in the morning, thus paying his way through the university. Later he accepted the position of private secretary to the Grand Chief of the O. R. T. This brought him into close contact with the whole Labor movement and its leaders, including Eugene V. Debs. When his sponsor failed of re-election as Grand Chief of the O. R. T., Dr. Arkin joined him in Chicago and undertook to publish a weekly Labor paper, from a law office in the Masonic Temple. This enterprise failed at the end of one year due to lack of support from working men, though it won the recognition of Labor leaders. Having exhausted all his savings, he turned heavy-hearted to the chief operator of the Northern Pacific in St. Paul, who assigned him to the post of telegrapher and stenographer in the General Agent's office at Butte, Montana. There he found some rest for his soul. Although anything but churchly, and inclined rather to despise organized Christianity, he found in that seething, feverish life of a wide open mining town, where saloons and gambling places never closed, the most congenial atmosphere in the library and the Church. Subsequently he actually became a Sunday school teacher to please the rector whose simple preaching he liked, though it was a year before they spoke a word to each other. Their friendship grew apace thereafter. The rector, Sator Clay Blakiston, was a gray-haired, kindly New England gentleman whose memory Dr. Arkin still dearly cherishes. It was he who gave a new direction to the unsettled mind of Dr. Arkin. It was he who for the first time suggested to Dr. Arkin the idea of the



ministry. At first Dr. Arkin flatly rejected it, pleading unfitness for such an exalted position fraught with so grave a responsibility, but ultimately was persuaded to think it over. Slowly the idea grew in his mind that the pulpit would give him the opportunity of transmitting to others the truth which dawned upon him, and at the same time do as much, if no more, for the common people and for the cause of labor as he might in any other walk of life. The wholesome atmosphere of a clerical life, free from the sharp practices in the business world, became more and more attractive as he thought of the ministry. An ingrained love of books also weighed heavily in the balance, so that when, after a long period of waiting, Mr. Blakiston again broached the matter, holding himself responsible for any possibility of failure, Dr. Arkin found himself persuaded. Thereupon Mr. Blakiston commended him to Bishop Whitaker, who became his postulant for the Philadelphia Divinity School in 1897. The money saved in Butte helped him through a year's preparation for it. During his Divinity School studies he was in charge of its library, acted as assistant to the Chaplain of the Church Home for Children, Fifty-eighth Street and Baltimore Avenue, and in his last year in the Divinity School he was teacher of a Bible class in St. Asaph's, Bala, which grew from three to seventy-five members.

Naturally at graduation his expectations were high. He hoped to be placed where people lived. Dr. Olmstead, rector of St. Asaph's, offered him the position of assistant in his church at an attractive salary. But Bishop Whitaker would not listen to it, saying that there was not enough work for a young man there, and that he had a better place for him. Imagine his feelings when, after long waiting, Bishop Whitaker offered him St. George's Mission, surrounded by vacant lots and truck farms, as heretofore described. In bitter disappointment he rebelled, refusing to go. But it was only for a moment. For Bishop Whitaker was kind; and he remembered his promise to the Bishop on entering the Divinity School that he would go wherever sent. Flinging all his dreams to the wind, he accepted the offer. "I knew," said the Bishop, "I knew that I had not misplaced confidence in you." It was this confidence that Dr. Arkin strove thenceforth to justify. He would rather be disappointed himself than to disappoint his Bishop. And that was the spirit with which he threw himself into the most difficult task, and has continued therein until this day, for he would not disappoint friends who came readily to his help financially because they had confidence in him.

The story of his successive achievements in erecting a church building which is the admiration of all has already been told. It is the beauty spot of the neighborhood.

For many years he also held religious services regularly, Sunday

mornings and Wednesday evenings, at the Richmond car barn, which changed considerably the atmosphere of the place.

He organized the Richmond Branch of the University Extension Association, and for more than six years courses of lectures by university professors on various topics were delivered to goodly audiences in the Parish House and later in the new public library.

He obtained from Mrs. Weightman Walker a gift of land on which he persuaded Dr. John Thompson, head of the municipal free library system, to build the magnificent public library out of the Carnegie Fund, and likewise persuaded City Councils to buy the adjoining lot for a public square, civic improvements which have proved to be of lasting benefit to the people, intellectually and socially.

The then empty lot back of the church, still owned by Mrs. Weightman Walker, he turned by her permission into a school garden under the supervision of trained teachers assigned there by Dr. Brumbaugh, then Superintendent of Public Schools. This lasted for twelve years down through the World War and was the delight of all the community.

The Cohocksink Playground, bounded by Cedar, Gaul, Ann and Cambria Streets, with its recreation building and swimming pool, enjoyed by thousands throughout the year, owes its existence solely to Dr. Arkin. It was he who saw the need and brought it into being, in the face, strange to say, of the opposition of some local interests who argued that there was no need for it. And the steel flag pole from which Old Glory is flung to the breeze was erected through the efforts of St. George's Father's Meeting to the memory of those of the neighborhood who fought in the World War.

This is also true of the magnificent Paul Jones Junior High School, just a square away from the playground. For it was Dr. Arkin who, through the influence of his friends, had City Councils authorize the purchase of the lot, originally intended for the playground and subsequently transferred to the Board of Education for school purposes. When, through the renewed efforts of Dr. Arkin, the present playground was secured, and the former lot was later put up at auction on the plea of the need of money to raise school teachers' salaries and that this neighborhood needed no more schools, it was Dr. Arkin who pleaded with the Board of Education to retain it. Thanks to the new Superintendent, Dr. Broome, it became the site of the present Junior High School.

The all-absorbing thought of Dr. Arkin was the promotion of the welfare of the working people. There is hardly a philanthropic or charitable agency that Dr. Arkin has not utilized to that end.

It was he who persuaded the Octavia Hill Association to erect its





MAJOR A. J. DREXEL-BIDDLE

### *Sketch of Dr. A. J. Arkin's Career*

fine group of houses next to the playground, an enterprise by which hundreds of families have been benefited.

When the Emergency Aid Bureau was organized under the late Mrs. J. Willis Martin during the depression of some years ago, St. George's Parish House was the distributing station in this neighborhood.

During the summer months for many years Dr. Arkin has been instrumental in sending groups of boys and girls for a week's or two weeks' vacation into the country through the Children's Country Week Association, averaging at times over a hundred a season. He was the first to secure the benefits of this philanthropy for this neighborhood.

For many years also St. George's served as a branch of the Coal and Stamp Savings Funds, much needed in those days both in Venango and Richmond, taking in on an average from \$125 to \$150 a week in deposits of from one cent to a dollar each.

For many years he managed an annual free picnic to Fairmount Park of from 1,000 to 1,300 children of the neighborhood through the Lemon Hill Association, which furnished street car transportation.

He was not long in the Old Chapel at Venango before he called the attention of city authorities to the disease-breeding lack of proper drainage there, and hastened its improvement.

During the bitter complaints of workingmen against the sweatshop evil in the clothing industry, Dr. Arkin, as secretary of the then Christian Social Union, a national church association in the interest of Labor, in company with the Rev. Dr. John Poyntz Tyler, then rector of the Church of the Advent, guided by a labor leader and followed by a host of newspaper men, toured through the clothing factories and many of the private sweatshops, including some of the bakeries in South Philadelphia. Publication of their report the following day created a great furore and led to better working conditions in both these industries.

It was he whom the president of the Child Labor Committee, Dr. George Woodward, chose as one of the delegates to plead before a legislative committee in Harrisburg in favor of Child Labor Laws.

It was he whom Governor Brumbaugh appointed delegate to the World's Purity Convention held at Louisville, Ky.

It was Dr. Arkin who for several years managed to get together leading business men and labor leaders to discuss amicably in open forum at the Church House their differences, which were quite enlightening to the audience.

Labor leaders who had been invited to one of St. George's Father's meetings bore witness in their speeches to the fact that more than once the intercession of Dr. Arkin led to amicable settlement in labor disputes.



### *Sketch of Dr. A. J. Arkin's Career*

---

All these and more were, however, a side issue to his great and chief task as a pastor of a congregation, and as a missionary bringing to them the Gospel message of Christ and rearing the young under the influence of Christ's religion.

The welfare of the young always has had a special appeal to Dr. Arkin, and he considers himself fortunate in the long and lasting friendship of Major A. J. Drexel Biddle, who for many years has given most generously his co-operation in their behalf, and not in their behalf only, but in behalf of all St. George's people.

Major Biddle has contributed much to the life and vigor of the "Junior Marines," two companies, one of boys and one of girls.

He is also responsible to a large extent for the life and activity of the Men's Guild. This society of men meets every Tuesday evening and listens to talks given by Dr. Arkin, followed by general discussion. His talks are usually on the Bible, and things concerning religion. It is not too much to say that in the presentation of the truths of the Bible there is scarcely a teacher in the Diocese of Pennsylvania who is clearer and more convincing to the average man. In recognition of his ability and learning the members of the Men's Guild were moved with one accord to confer upon him the honorary degree of "Doctor of Biblical Literature." And a diploma to that effect was drawn up and formally presented to him in open meeting. Doubtless many recipients of formal degrees from leading universities would treasure a diploma of this kind, a symbol of honor and love that came straight from the hearts of his people.

It is impossible to enumerate all the good works done in this neighborhood that are to his credit. I mention only those which are well known to me. I know also that the Doctor does not look for any credit; but his honest desire is to enlist the advice and co-operation of all in his endeavor to spread the teaching of Christ, summed up by Him in His commandment to love God and neighbor. This Dr. Arkin has been trying to preach and live during the thirty years of his ministry in this neighborhood. For in all his dealings, irrespective of nationality or creed, he stressed "The Brotherhood of Man."

The writer disclaims any idea of eulogizing Dr. Arkin, but is prompted by a sense of fairness and justice to obtain for him a fuller sense of appreciation by the people whom he has so faithfully and unselfishly served.

If his life and deeds were more generally known, he would be numbered among those who have received public recognition by a well merited award.